

Preface

The *South Carolina Foreign Language Studies* document presents a statewide consensus regarding what students and teachers need to know and do in foreign language education and the process by which the necessary changes will occur. This document expects all students to begin foreign language study in elementary school and to continue through a sequential, articulated, standards-driven K–12 program.

This document is not curriculum guide but a broad instructional design for continuous improvement of the educational system intended for use by policymakers, instructional leaders, teachers, and communities. It can serve as a common reference point to ensure that all components of the educational system work together and reinforce the same vision of instructional excellence in South Carolina classrooms.

This document began in 1991 with the appointment of a team of teachers, administrators, and postsecondary faculty who had written, taught, or lectured in foreign languages. This team made fundamental decisions concerning the basic tenets for foreign language instruction. The document was distributed to districts, schools, county libraries, members of the business community, parents, and colleges and universities for extensive public review and comment. In 1993, the document entitled *South Carolina Foreign Language Framework* was adopted by the State Board of Education. However, in subsequent years, the inclusion of foreign languages in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, as well as the publication of *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* and the growth of elementary school foreign language programs, necessitated a revision of the document itself. The Foreign Language Curriculum Standards Committee, appointed in 1997 to write the standards that would accompany the document, undertook the task of updating the 1993 document. Revisions were made in the summer of 1998, and the second edition of the *South Carolina Foreign Language Studies* was adopted by the State Board of Education in 1999.

In that same year the *South Carolina Foreign Language Curriculum Standards* was also adopted. Standards in this document set high expectations for all students and are intended to raise the level of competence and improve student performance in foreign language study. It will enable educational professionals to design and implement effective standards-driven curricula for optimum student progress.

The policy and program changes advocated in the *Foreign Language Studies* and the *Foreign Language Curriculum Standards*, which are now combined in this single volume, will guide the efforts of the State Department of Education and others responsible for the quality of foreign language education in South Carolina. No policy or program changes are automatically in effect as the result of the adoption of this document. Many types of changes recommended in this combined document will require formal approval of regulatory or statutory changes or are a matter of local authority requiring action or approval by school districts or local school boards. All who have a direct role in South Carolina education will use the document in shaping their policies, programs, planning, budgets, and personnel decisions.

The changes outlined in this document will take time: all the instructional goals cannot be met overnight, within a few months, or even a few years. Such changes, as the provision regarding professional development and instructional resources that support standards-driven education will require thoughtful discussion and necessary support. Policy changes at the state level may include instructional resources selection, assessment, school accreditation, teacher certification and recertification, and staff development.

The *South Carolina Foreign Language Studies and Curriculum Standards* appropriately and accurately describes the goals and standards of foreign language instruction to carry South Carolina's schools through the millennium.